

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY
THE HONORABLE W.J. "BILLY" TAUZIN
CHAIRMAN
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE**

BEFORE

**THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION
MARCH 7, 2001**

**Budget Request for the Committee on Energy and Commerce
For the 107th Congress**

Written Testimony of the Honorable W.J. "Billy" Tauzin
Chairman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce

107th Congress Budget Request

Chairman Ney, Ranking Minority Member Hoyer, and Members of the Committee, I am grateful for the opportunity to testify before you today in support of the Committee on Energy and Commerce's budget request for the 107th Congress. My Committee has previously provided you with a formal request, including our oversight plan and many other materials, so this written testimony will be brief.

Let me focus on three key areas.

First, personnel. First year associates at K Street law firms – lawyers, yes, but perhaps not the most skilled attorneys in the land – are receiving salaries upwards of \$150,000 per year. Most, if not all, of the business before the Committee on Energy and Commerce requires the expertise of attorneys who have considerable experience in their fields – telecommunications, energy policy, the environment, health care, and consumer protection. If lawyers just out of law school are being paid \$150,000 per year, you can imagine what attorneys who actually know what they are talking about are receiving.

That is the competition we face. There has always been a considerable difference between public and private sector salaries for attorneys, but in the last year or so, this inequity has become grossly exaggerated.

There should be no crime, therefore, in our coming before you and requesting fully 91% of our budget for personnel costs. We will never be able to match K Street salaries; we know that. But we must make our compensation structure attractive enough to those who desire to devote some of their careers to public service affordable enough for them to do so.

Our need is especially critical in light of the complex task ahead of us. Nearly one dozen of the priorities that President Bush discussed in his address to Congress the other night are within the jurisdiction of the Energy and Commerce Committee – everything from brownfields redevelopment to prescription drugs to national energy policy. In order to meet the challenge – and the opportunity – presented by the President, we must have adequate resources and personnel.

Second, minority resources. We have made a good faith effort to reach the bipartisan goal of allocating fully one-third of Committee resources and one-third of Committee staff slots to our minority. John Dingell can tell you if we've done a good job, but I think we have. Under our budget, beginning in 2002, the minority will have attained both of these goals in our Committee.

Of course, reaching the one-third goals comes with a price. The majority cannot simply give away the resources required to attain them – the Committee would simply cease to function. As a result, a dramatic part of our increase can be directly attributed to our effort to give the minority additional resources.

Third, hearing room upgrades. The Committee's two main hearing rooms – 2123 and 2322 Rayburn – desperately need upgrading. The Committee on Energy and Commerce is the high technology Committee, with jurisdiction over telecommunications, energy, and interstate commerce generally. But our jurisdiction does us no good when we have witnesses from Silicon Valley testify, and we can't even hear them. We are in dire need of a new amplification system, a complete refurbishment of our electronic infrastructure, and other technological essentials that many – if not most – other major committees now have.

We chose not to include the costs of the room upgrade in our budget request. Our sincere hope is that the House itself will fund the necessary improvements to our rooms. I have had the chance to discuss this with a number of you and with the House leadership. We will work with you in any way we can to get this done.

Again, I thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify today, and of course will be happy to answer any questions.